



**U.S. AIR FORCE**

## **This Week in USAF and PACAF History** **28 May – 3 June 2012**



30 May 1912 **Wilbur Wright**, age 45, died of typhoid fever at Dayton Ohio. He was exhausted after a long series of patent suits against other airplane builders, especially the Curtiss Company.

31 May 1915 The **German Zeppelin LZ-38** dropped bombs on London for the first time. About 150 small bombs set approximately 41 fires that killed seven people and injured 35. More bombing raids followed on London and Paris. The airships approached their targets silently at night at altitudes above the ceilings of British and French fighters. But higher-flying aircraft were built and armed with incendiary ammunition that set the hydrogen-filled zeppelins afire. Several zeppelins were also lost because of bad weather, and 17 were shot down because they could not climb as fast as the fighters. The crews also suffered from cold and oxygen deprivation when they maintained flight above 10,000 feet.



31 May 1935 Hawaii's newest airfield was officially dedicated as **Hickam Field** in honor of Lieutenant Colonel Horace Meek Hickam, a distinguished aviation pioneer who was killed in an aircraft accident on 5 November 1934 at Fort Crockett in Galveston, Texas.

29 May 1941 The Army Air Corps created the Ferrying Command to fly aircraft from U.S. factories to Canada and to Atlantic ports for delivery to Great Britain. By 7 Dec 1941, the command had delivered about 1,350 planes. On 20 June 1942, the Ferrying Command became the **Air Transport Command** with world-wide responsibility for ferrying aircraft; transporting personnel, materiel and mail and for maintaining air route facilities outside of the United States.

29 May 1941 Headquarters, Alaska Defense Command activated the Air Field Forces, Alaska Defense Command, with the responsibility of overseeing the training, planning and executing air defense operations in Alaska. The ADC order also **established Elmendorf Field** (also known as Alaska Air Base) as the maintenance and repair center for Alaska.



31 May 1951 **Operation STRANGLE**, a massive air interdiction campaign in Korea, was initiated by Fifth Air Force, the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW), and the Navy's Task Force 77. Operation STRANGLE was an attempt to paralyze enemy transportation between the 39th parallel and the front lines in Korea. The operation substantially interdicted the North Korean supply and communication lines,



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and it was highly successful against enemy rail-transportation. The bombing effort destroyed or damaged 40,000 trucks and prevented a Red Chinese buildup for future offensive operations. However, the operation failed to completely isolate communist forces on the front lines. Similar to an earlier campaign in Italy during World War II and later campaigns against the Ho Chi Minh trail in southeast Asia, Operation Strangle had diminishing success when the pressure on enemy ground forces was reduced. Additional reasons for the mixed results of this operation were the resiliency and magnitude of enemy logistics efforts, and the lack of effective night and all-weather attack capabilities among the U.S. joint air components.

**2 June 1958 First PACAF Fighter Symposium.** Through 6 June, PACAF held a US/Asian Fighter Weapons Symposium at the mountain resort of Baguio in the Philippines. PACAF Staff officers met with their counterparts from the Chinese Nationalist Air Force, Korean Air Force, Philippine Air Force, Royal Thai Air Force, and the Vietnamese Air Force. It was the first such conference on operational requirements and problems.

**3 June 1959 The Air Force Academy graduated its first class.** Of the 207 graduates, 205 were commissioned as regular USAF officers.

**31 May 1967 Mackay Trophy.** A KC-135 Stratotanker from the 902nd Air Refueling Squadron carried out a spectacular series of emergency refuelings that saved six fuel-starved Navy aircraft. As reported in Air Force magazine:

"A crew consisting of aircraft commander Maj. John H. Casteel, copilot Capt. Richard L. Trail, navigator Capt. Dean L. Hoar, and boom operator MSgt. Nathan C. Campbell was assigned a refueling track over the Gulf of Tonkin. Soon after they had established their track, Major Casteel's crew was alerted to refuel a pair of Air Force F-104 fighters on a support mission north of the DMZ. While refueling the F-104s, Casteel was informed that two Navy KA-3 tankers, desperately short of fuel, were on the way to his tanker. Both KA-3s had fuel they could transfer but could not use themselves. After receiving a partial load, the F-104s stayed with Casteel's KC-135 to defend it against possible MiG attacks while it refueled the Navy aircraft.

The first Navy tanker took on a minimum of fuel then broke off to allow the second KA-3 to hook up. At this point, two Navy F-8s were vectored to the KC-135 for emergency refueling. One F-8 was so low on fuel that the pilot could not wait for the second KA-3 to complete refueling. The Navy pilot hooked up to the KA-3 that still was taking on fuel from the KC-135. That is believed to have been the first tri-level refueling ever. While the dual transfer was in progress, the first KA-3 passed fuel to the second F-8, and then returned to the KC-135 to complete its own refueling.

This joint-service operation was still in progress when two Navy F-4s with bingo fuel were vectored to the KC-135 for emergency service. While waiting for the F-4s to appear, Casteel's crew gave the two Air Force F-104s another shot of fuel, then transferred enough to the Navy F-4s to get them to their carrier.



*KC-135 refueling Air Force F-4s over Southeast Asia*



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After this series of 10 refuelings, the KC-135 did not have enough fuel to return to its base in Thailand. It headed for an alternate in South Vietnam while refueling the two F-104s a third time to provide enough fuel to get them to their base.”

Casteel's crew all received Distinguished Flying Crosses for the action, and they were subsequently awarded the Mackay Trophy. Source: [Air Force Magazine](#).

1 June 1992 In a **major reorganization**, the Air Force inactivated Strategic Air Command, Tactical Air Command, and Military Airlift Command; it then activated Air Combat Command and Air Mobility Command. ACC received SAC's bombers and missiles and TAC's fighters, while AMC inherited MAC's transports and SAC's tankers. Air Force Space Command assumed management responsibility for the Air Force Satellite Communications System, formerly managed by Strategic Air Command.

The Department of Defense activated United States Strategic Command, which assumed wartime responsibility for U.S. nuclear forces and their long-range delivery systems. The last commander of Strategic Air Command, Gen. George L. Butler, USAF, became the first commander of United States Strategic Command.

On July 1, the Air Force continued its reorganization with the inactivations of Air Force Logistics Command and Air Force Systems Command; it then activated Air Force Materiel Command to replace them.

31 May 1996 The USAF awarded multi-year contracts to McDonnell-Douglas and Pratt & Whitney for 80 C-17 Globemaster III aircraft and engines. The contracts, valued at \$16.2 billion, were the **longest and the largest multi-year government contracts** to date and increased the number of USAF C-17s at the time to 120. The acquisition also enabled the retirement of C-141s from the active Air Force.



2 June 2004 In a flight bringing home the remains of two American servicemen missing since the Vietnam War, Major General Edward Mechenbier (USAFR) piloted the '**Hanoi Taxi**,' a C-141 Starlifter that carried the first group of repatriated American prisoners of war in 1973. General Mechenbier had been a POW in Vietnam for six years and was on the Hanoi Taxi's first flight out of Vietnam. The "Hanoi Taxi" C-141 (66-0177) is currently on display at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio.

1 June 2005 The "**General George C. Kenney Headquarters (Provisional)**" was activated at Hickam AFB, Hawaii and attached to HQ PACAF. On the same day, the Thirteenth Air Force moved to the Kenney Headquarters as the core of an operational-level component headquarters organization.